#### TONY KNOWLES, GOVERNOR

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ALASKA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
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**DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL** 

August 8, 1996

Mr. William F. Caton Acting Secretary Federal Communications Commission Room 222 1919 M Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: CC Docket No. 96-45

Dear Mr. Caton:

Enclosed are an original and four copies of the Comments of the Alaska Public Utilities Commission in response to the Public Notice (DA96-1094) released July 10, 1996, by the Common Carrier Bureau seeking comments on proxy models.

Sincerely,

ALASKA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Don Schröer, Chairman

No. of Copies rec'd\_ List A B C D E

## DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

Before the 1 Federal Communications Commission 2 Washington, D.C. 20554 3 4 In the Matter of 5 CC Docket No. 96-45 Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service 6 7 8 Comments of the 9 10 Alaska Public Utilities Commission 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 Don Schröer, Chairman Date: August 8, 1996 26

Alaska Public Utilities Commission 1016 West Sixth Avenue, Suite 400 Anchorage, Alaska 99501

> Don Schröer, Chairman Alaska Public Utilities Commission 1016 West Sixth Avenue, Suite 300 Anchorage, Alaska 99501

## Alaska Public Utilities Commission

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#### **SUMMARY**

The revised version of the Benchmark Cost Model (BCM2) fails to accurately represent Alaska costs, and if applied to Alaska, could compromise the provision of universal service.

The existing proxy models do not adequately represent the costs for small rural companies. As a result, if a proxy based approach adopted, then a bifurcated should system is implemented to allow rural companies the use of book costs instead of proxy costs. Rural carriers should begin to transition off of bifurcated approach, if only after at all, quantifiably demonstrated that the new system reflects the cost characteristics of the small companies, and companies have the ability to seek waiver. A streamlined, well documented, waiver process must be included in any proxy mechanism to accommodate those companies with legitimate high costs that not contemplated under the model. Applications for waiver should be accepted for review whenever use of the proxy model would lead to a set amount of increase (e.g., \$2) in the monthly local phone bill.

## Before the FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION Washington, D.C. 20554

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In the Matter of	)	MAIL ROCK					
Federal-State Joint Board on	)	CC Docket No. 96-45					
Universal Service	)						

## Comments of the Alaska Public Utilities Commission

The Alaska Public Utilities Commission (APUC) appreciates the opportunity to file comments in response to the July 10, 1996, Public Notice (DA 96-1094) on universal service in CC Docket 96-45.

## 1. A bifurcated approach should be implemented to allow the Use of book costs (instead of proxy costs) for rural companies

If a proxy model is adopted, then a bifurcated approach should be implemented to allow rural companies to obtain support based on actual book costs instead of proxy costs. First, all of the proxy models to date are based to a significant degree on the cost characteristics of large local exchange companies with extensive operations in urban areas. As a result, it cannot be concluded that any of the models truly represents the costs for

Comments of the Alaska Public Utilities Commission

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an efficient small rural company. For example, none of the proxy models adequately take into consideration that small companies may have extremely low economies of scale or may not be able to negotiate the cost discounts available to the larger, urban-based local carriers. Furthermore, no correlation has ever been shown to exist between the outputs of any of the proxy models and actual construction costs of existing companies. The APUC therefore supports the concept that small rural companies should remain under some form of the existing high cost support system until pilot projects can be run of any new system and it can be quantitatively demonstrated that the new system will lead to reasonable results when applied to small rural companies.

## 2. Any transition of rural carriers to a proxy system requires

Rural carriers should begin to transition off of a bifurcated approach, if at all, only after a) it can be quantitatively demonstrated that the new system reasonably reflects the cost characteristics of the small companies involved, and b) streamlined procedures are in place to accommodate requests for waiver to use alternative methods (e.g., alternate proxy or a cost based system).

Comments of the Alaska Public Utilities Commission

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#### 3. Existing proxy models fail to adequately address Alaska high cost issues.

As has been documented in the APUC's Comments filed on October 9, 1995, in CC Docket No. 80-286, Alaska's high costs are the result of several conditions including:

- a) Terrain, slope, and surface characteristics such as mountains, glaciers, rivers, permafrost, ice effects, avalanche susceptibility, and the physical placement of the plant to accommodate these factors;
  - b) Harsh climate;
- c) Lack of a road system to most of the state's locations and heavy reliance on airplanes and sea barge to transport equipment and access the majority of rural communities in Alaska;
- d) Limitations placed on surface transportation and the construction season due to Arctic conditions;
- Limited economies of scale (e.g., service to exchanges e) of under 200 lines); and
  - f) High labor costs.

None of the proxy models filed to date reflect any of the As a results, the APUC does not believe that any above factors. of the existing proxy models are appropriate to Alaska.

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In addition, given that local competition does not exist in rural Alaska at this time, it would seem premature to adopt a competitive bidding based model for rural Alaska. therefore proposes that Alaskan local exchange carriers should be allowed to remain on some form of the existing cost-based system at this time, until it can be quantitatively documented that the new proxy model, when applied to Alaska, leads to no harm and does not produce unwarranted reductions in high cost support.

Alaska is highly reliant on universal service support to maintain rates at reasonable levels. Without support, local rates in Alaska could increase by \$20 to \$80 per month in some locations. As support to Alaska currently represents only 4% of the existing Universal Service Fund and weighted Dial Equipment Minutes support systems, the APUC believes that maintaining Alaska on an actual cost system will not be unduly burdensome.

The existing proxy models should not be applied to Alaska as they fail to adequately represent Alaska costs. several of the models currently under consideration are based on the Benchmark Cost Model (BCM). The APUC has reviewed the updated version of the BCM (BCM2) and concluded that there is a serious flaw in the results for Alaska and possibly for other states.

Comments of the Alaska Public Utilities Commission

Page 4 of 8 CC Docket No. 96-45

support provided under the Universal Service Fund (USF) as reported under the May 1996, Monitoring Report in CC Docket No. 87-339 and the support that would be provided to each state under BCM2 given a \$20, \$50, and \$80 revenue benchmark. This correlation indicated that under BCM2, Alaska will receive an unusually low (in fact the lowest) amount of support, relative to existing levels of high cost support, compared to all other states.¹

To illustrate this point, local exchange companies in the

The APUC performed a correlation test between existing high cost

state of Nevada have on average the lowest unseparated non-traffic-sensitive NTS revenue requirements per loop in the country (\$186/loop) and obtain about \$3 million in USF support. Under BCM2, these carriers would receive \$84 million in support, 28 times the existing USF, at the \$20 benchmark level. Alaska, with one of the highest historical per loop costs (\$381.62) would receive only 1.8 times its existing USF support (\$31 million compared to \$58 million). At the \$50 benchmark, Alaska is the only state that would receive less under BCM2 (68%) than under the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>APUC's analysis was run assuming a \$20, \$50, and \$80 revenue benchmark. For the \$20, and \$50 benchmark, Alaska has the lowest BCM2 support to historical loop support ratio. For the \$80 benchmark, 75% of the states have a higher BCM2 support to historical support ratio than Alaska.

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existing USF, with many other states receiving over 10 times their existing levels of support. At the \$80 benchmark, Alaska would receive 34% of its existing USF while carriers in states with low average loop cost such as Nevada and Pennsylvania would obtain 481% and 829%, respectively, of their existing levels of support. At the \$80 benchmark, Alaskans in rural areas could see, on average, local phone rates increase by over \$100 per year. 2 See Furthermore, under the existing system Alaska receives the fifth highest amount of USF support while under BCM2 at the \$20 benchmark level, Alaska would receive the sixth lowest amount of support.

These figures demonstrate that there is something seriously wrong with BCM2 and likely any model reliant on foundation. As a result, application of a BCM based model should not be required in Alaska.

As a last point, the APUC notes that under BCM2 many areas of Alaska where local exchanges exist are not included in the cost analysis (see Attachment B). For example, Deadhorse/Prudhoe Bay does not appear to be incorporated in the cost model.

<sup>&#</sup>x27;Assuming existing levels of USF support (\$31 million) are reduced to the BCM2 level (\$11 million at the \$80 benchmark), with approximately 180,000 rural access lines affected.

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#### Companies should have recourse to seek waiver if a proxy system s adopted.

The proxy models filed in this proceeding consider only a limited number of factors that may lead to high costs. be instances where a company will experience high costs due to conditions not adequately represented under the model. Some companies may also have a one time occurrence of high costs (e.g., damage due to earthquake, flood, or storm) that cannot be predicted by any proxy model. In both of these circumstances, the company involved should have an opportunity to apply for and receive waiver to allow alternative treatment. Any such waiver process should be streamlined and clearly described such that companies are aware of what documentation need be provided and under what conditions waiver may be granted. Applications for waiver should be accepted whenever use of the proxy model would lead to an increase in the monthly local rate that is greater than Setting a limit of this kind may prevent a set amount (e.g., \$2). rate shock and reduce subscriber losses.

#### Conclusion

The APUC requests that any changes to the existing high cost support system be carefully considered and quantitatively reviewed

Comments of the Alaska Public Utilities Commission

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prior to applying the system to small rural companies. Many of the existing proxy proposals offered to date in this proceeding are clearly inadequate to address high cost issues in rural areas of the nation.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED this 8th day of August, 1996.

Sincerely,

By: Commissioner Don Schröer Chairman of the Alaska Public Utilities Commission

Utilities Commission

1016 West Sixth Avenue, Suite 300

Anchorage, Alaska 99501

1-907-276-6222

cc: William F. Caton
Acting Secretary

Federal Communications Commission

Attached List

	A	В	С	D	E	F	G	H	T	J	K	L	
	UNDER THE EXISTING USF SYSTEM UNIVERSAL					UNDER BCM2				n of Exist			
										ersal Serv	ice Fund	ı	
	UNSEPARATED		SERVICE FUND		BCM2 Agg	regated Su	ipport		to BCM Support				
	NTS REVENUE	UNSEP. NTS	PAYMENTS	% of	(Support in			BCM2					
	REQUIREMENT	REV REQ	FOR 1996	TOTAL	(	us Benchm	- 1	Benchmark	Benchmark I	Revenue Lev	1	BCM2 Co	
STATE	(Millions)	PER LOOP	(Millions)	Fund	\$20	\$50	\$80	Cost Total	\$20	\$50	\$80	URR Cost	
ALABAMA	\$579	\$264.46	\$22	2.99%	\$349	\$48	\$2	\$1,054	1587.73%	217.77%	9.11%	181.9	
ALASKA	\$132	\$381.62	\$31	4.22%	\$58	\$21	\$11	\$177	185.48%	67.97%	34.49%	134.0	
ARIZONA	\$642	\$279.60	\$16	2.13%	\$243	<b>\$</b> 65	\$32	\$899	1555.12%	415.32%	203.44%	140.1	
ARKANSAS	\$411	\$337.80	\$38	5.18%	\$266	\$68	\$10	\$697	697.96%	178.56%	24.96%	169.	
CALIFORNIA	\$4,015	\$206.51	\$46	6.24%	\$883	\$84	\$27	\$5,953	1926.50%	182.92%	59.92%	148.2	
COLORADO	\$592	\$260.35	\$4	0.55%	\$217	\$51	\$21	\$868	5356.04%	1251.06%	508.92%	146.	
CONNECTICUT	\$460	\$243.90	\$0	0.00%	\$167	\$15	\$0	\$753				163.	
DELAWARE	\$100	\$213.93	\$0	0.00%	\$35	\$2	\$0	\$167				167.2	
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	\$65	\$77.03	\$0 ************************************	0.00%	\$4	\$0	\$0	\$189	0047.500/	407.000	05 0004	288.	
FLORIDA	\$2,713	\$301.25	\$25 \$27	3.34%	\$692	\$46 \$54	\$6 \$3	\$3,171 \$1,654	2817.52%	187.60% 195.22%	25.62% 9.75%	116.9 132.8	
GEORGIA	\$1,245	\$310.56		3.73% 0.00%	\$442 \$51	\$54 \$8	\$2		1612.51%	195.22%	9./5%	129.4	
HAWAII	\$181	\$277.13	\$0 \$17	2.37%	\$51 \$101	\$8 \$35	\$15	\$234 \$289	579.45%	201.38%	83.45%	129.4	
DAHO	\$182 \$1,197	\$310.28 \$167.35	\$17 \$3	2.37% 0.42%	\$528	\$35 \$67	\$15 \$5	\$2,636	17305.60%	2194.99%		220.	
LLINOIS INDIANA	\$1,197	\$231.16	\$3 <b>\$</b> 2	0.42%		\$67 \$39	\$0	\$∠,636 \$1,350	17075.19%	1819.56%	20.42%	189.	
OWA	\$294	\$201.79	\$2 \$4	0.48%		\$57	\$3	\$754	7133.09%	1612.28%	70.22%	256.	
CANSAS	\$402	\$284.09	\$27	3.63%	\$217	\$65	\$23	\$675	812.36%	244.53%	86.64%	167.	
KENTUCKY	\$550	\$294.30	\$10	1.38%	\$324	\$47	\$1	\$958	3197.85%	467.14%	12.74%	174.	
OUISIANA	\$689	\$311.19	\$33	4.52%	\$303	\$44	\$3	\$1,000	912.57%	132.00%	9.64%	145.	
MAINE	\$242	\$337.46	\$7	1.00%		\$55	\$13	\$416	2266.83%	749.96%		172.	
MARYLAND	\$666	\$213.86	\$0	0.00%		\$8	\$1	\$1,030				154.	
MASSACHUSETTS	\$866	\$225.25	\$0	0.00%		\$16	\$1	\$1,305				150.	
MICHIGAN	\$1,265	\$226.82	\$12	1.58%	\$587	\$61	\$6	\$2,297	5051.82%	522.41%	54,17%	181.	
MICRONESIA	\$10	\$681.60	\$4	0.58%									
MINNESOTA	\$587	\$228.56	\$8	1.09%	\$329	\$80	\$13	\$1,121	4120.28%	998.78%	160.21%	190.	
MISSISSIPPI	\$418	\$346.53	\$14	1.87%	\$254	\$46	\$3	\$687	1844.68%	334.21%	18.45%	164.	
MISSOURI	\$742	\$252.28	\$46	6.29%	\$424	\$116	\$25	\$1,346	917.03%	252.03%	54.38%	181.	
MONTANA	\$148	\$323.08	\$12	1.64%		\$43	\$20	\$262	823.64%	352.17%	164.02%	176.	
NEBRASKA	\$197	\$216.54	\$5	0.66%		\$50	\$15	\$451	3078.47%	1037.27%		228.	
NEVADA	\$178	\$186.35	\$3	0.41%	\$84	\$26	\$14	\$342	2798,94%	878.47%		191.	
NEW HAMPSHIRE	\$232	\$334.63	<b>\$</b> 5	0.70%		\$23	\$3	\$328	2077.07%	443.64%	56.36%	141.	
NEW JERSEY	\$1,104	\$202.66	\$2	0.22%		\$5	\$0	\$1,633	14478.01%	316.49%	22.41%	147.	
NEW MEXICO	\$252	\$313.07	\$16	2.21%		\$51	\$24	\$394	837,29%		146.68%	156.	
NEW YORK	\$3,057	\$263.81	\$12	1.66%		\$90	\$18	\$3,658	5402.45%	738.80%		119.	
NORTH CAROLINA	\$1,201	\$301.22	\$22	2.98%		\$56	\$2	\$1,750	2421.80%	253.76%	7.87%	145.	
NORTH DAKOTA	\$100	\$263.48	\$4	0.52%		\$47	\$23	\$223	2414.15%	1226.08%		222.	
OHIO	\$1,366	\$227.32	\$2	0.29% 3.68%		\$51 \$61	\$0 \$12	\$2,510 \$834	28456.47% 989.65%	2360.65% 223.96%	11.44% 45.60%	183. 174.	
OKLAHOMA	\$478 \$483	\$275.97 \$276.03	\$27 \$10	1.34%		\$52	\$12 \$19	\$63 <del>4</del> \$758	2205.14%	525.55%		156	
OREGON		\$276.03 \$213.87	\$10 \$1	0.13%		\$5∠ \$85	\$19 \$8	\$2,739	62756.79%	8746.56%		177.	
PENNSYLVANIA PUERTO RICO	\$1,547 \$412	\$356.78	\$30	4.02%		<b>Ģ</b> OO	φO	\$2,739	02/30./976	6/40.50%	020.0276	l '''.	
RHODE ISLAND	\$131	\$229,24	\$30 \$0	0.00%		\$3	\$0	\$216	J.			165.	
SOUTH CAROLINA	\$645	\$345.84	\$20	2.72%		\$36	\$1	\$882	1398.53%	182.61%	4.75%	136	
SOUTH CAROLINA	\$92	\$244.80	\$20 \$2	0.32%		\$39	\$15	\$233	4021,23%	1688.42%		254	
TENNESSEE	\$785	\$268.81	\$3	0.46%		\$50	\$4	\$1,274	11536.68%	1475.97%		162	
TEXAS	\$2,668	\$264.22	\$89	12.13%		\$163	\$40	\$3,895	1083.24%	183.19%	44.92%	145	
JTAH	\$192	\$208.74	\$3	0.37%		\$24	\$12	\$355	3311.51%	890.28%		184	
/ERMONT	\$135	\$383,16	\$5 \$5	0.70%		\$23	\$4	\$192	1407.59%	445.10%	80.10%		
/IRGIN ISLANDS	\$32	\$560.39	\$11	1.55%		720	- '	1	1	, , , , , , , , ,	-0.,570		
VIRGINIA	\$964	\$252.01	\$4	0.55%		\$41	\$2	\$1,545	9321.04%	1024.07%	48.93%	160	
WASHINGTON	\$727	\$235.03	\$16	2.16%		\$48	\$15	\$1,162	1762.76%	305.09%	96,64%	159	
WEST VIRGINIA	\$318	\$361,39	\$20	2.67%		\$58	\$10	\$541	1093.69%	298.45%	51.06%		
WISCONSIN	\$643	\$219.80	\$7	1.02%		\$56	\$6	\$1,249	4599.07%	745.05%	82.92%	194	
WYOMING	\$104	\$393.78	\$7	1.00%		\$21	\$12	\$145	682.37%		161.04%		
NDUSTRY TOTAL:	\$38,152		\$735	100.00%		\$2,400	\$506	\$59,252	1			<del>                                     </del>	

NTS: Non-Traffic-Sensitive URR: Unseparated NTS Revenue Requirement

USF: Universal Service Fund

A: Actual total loop costs

B: Costs/loop
C: Existing loop support
D: Percent support

for each state

E: Support under BCM2 at a \$20 benchmark

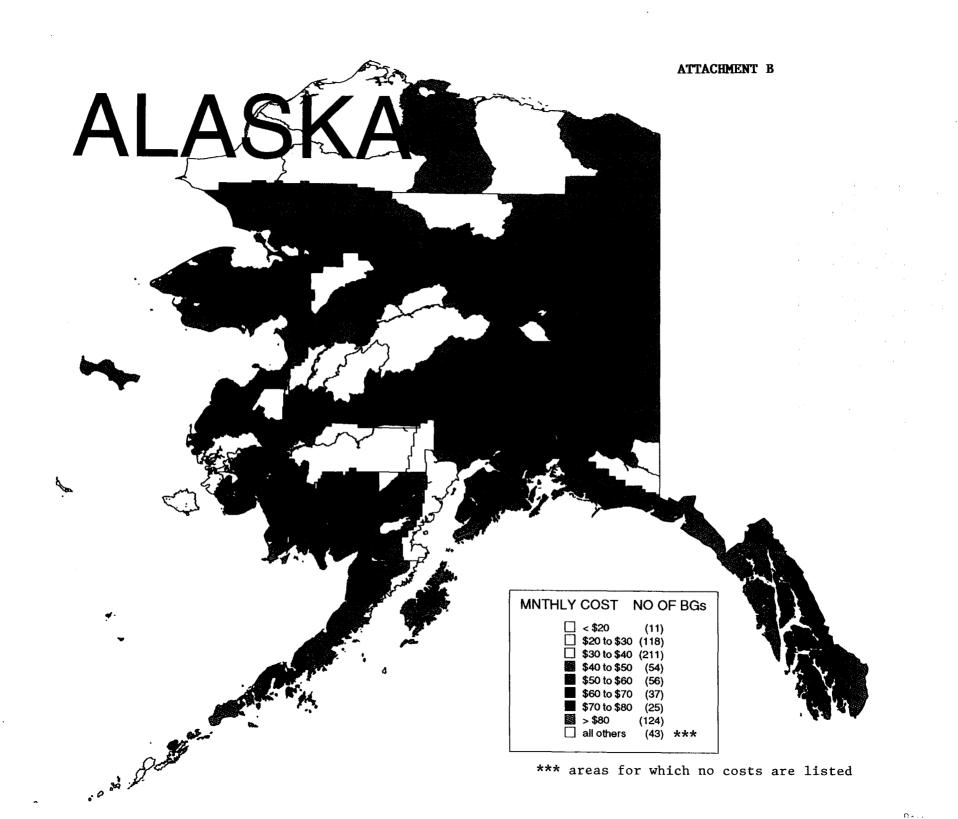
F: Support under BCM2 at a \$50 benchmark

G: Support under BCM2

at a \$80 benchmark H: Total costs under BCM2

I: E/C J: F/C

K: G/C L: H/A



# Anchorage, Alaska 99501 (907) 276-6222; TTY (907) 276-4533

## STATE OF ALASKA AUG 91996 THE ALASKA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION AUG 91996

Before Commissioners:

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Don Schröer, Chairman Alyce A. Hanley Dwight D. Ornquist Tim Cook Sam Cotten

Federal-State Joint Board ) On Universal Service

CC Docket No. 96-45

#### CERTIFICATION OF MAILING

I, Linda L. Schwass, certify as follows:

I am an Administrative Clerk II in the offices of the Alaska Public Utilities Commission, 1016 W. Sixth Avenue, Suite 400, Anchorage, Alaska 99501.

On August 8, 1996, I mailed true and accurate copies with postage thereon of:

#### COMMENTS OF ALASKA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

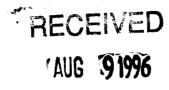
CC 96-45

to the persons indicated on the attached service list.

DATED at Anchorage, Alaska, this 8th day of August, 1996.

U-95-38 - Certification of Mailing Page 1 of 1

SERVICE LIST CC DOCKET 96-45 August 7, 1996 Page 1 of 6



FCC MAIL ROCA

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